STUDIES ON THE PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN DIALECT OF THE AMISH COMMUNITY IN ARTHUR, ILLINOIS

BY
ALFRED LEWIS SHOEMAKER
A.B., Muhlenberg College, 1934

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN
GERMAN IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE
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Introduction

In and around the village of Arthur in Moultrie and Douglas counties in Illinois there live approximately 1500 Old Order Amish who retain a German dialect known popularly throughout the nation as Pennsylvania Dutch. The Amish Church was founded by the Swiss reformer, Jacob Amman (Ammon), who between the years 1693 and 1697 separated from the Mennonite Church. One of the principal reasons which led to the schism was the controversy about shunning excommunicated members. Amman and his followers insisted that expelled members should be shunned everywhere and not only at the communion table as the Mennonites demanded. The Amish who have refused to change their basic old customs, such as meeting in the home of the members, have become known as Old Order Amish. Two or three years ago within this Amish community the Mennonites established a church for those who had broken away from the Amish fold. These Mennonites represent a small group of speakers of the dialect in the community who are not Amish.

More commonly, however, among themselves and especially among their English speaking neighbors the dialect is called Amish. In this thesis, therefore, I shall call the Pennsylvania German dialect of these speakers Arthur Amish (ArAm).

The settlement at Arthur, one of a number scattered throughout the country, was begun 75 years ago, in 1865, by four families from the Amish community at Summit Mills, Somerset County, Pennsylvania, an offshoot of the Lancaster County, Pennsylvania settlement founded by German and Swiss emigrants early in the 18th century. Soon other families arrived from Somerset County; from Grantsville, Maryland; and from Iowa, Ohio, Indiana and other states until today there are about 275 families located partly in Moultrie, Douglas and Coles counties.

It must be borne in mind, however, that although the majority of the Old Order Amish families were established in this country before the Revolutionary War, there are a few families that trace their ancestry

to Amish who came from Europe between the years 1820 to 1860. What influence these newcomers had upon the dialect it is no longer possible to ascertain.

This short historical background helps us in some measure to understand some of the many influences that have come to bear upon the dialect.

Ever since the very beginning of the 19th century, almost a century and a half ago, when Somerset County settlement was founded, the dialect has been spoken by a relatively small group surrounded constantly by people who spoke and understood only English. The children have gone to public schools where only English is taught. In addition to this constant English influence there has been the constant presence of Standard German heard to a degree in church, read in Luther's Bible, the Ausbund (the Amish hymnal), and in several other religious books. There has always been instruction in Standard German. At present in Arthur German is taught during the summer in Sunday School and in the winter months to boys and girls who have finished grade school. The Amish children are not allowed to go further than eight grades.

Among the Amish the language of the home is almost exclusively Amish. Many children first learn English when they start to public school. The men as a whole come into much more frequent contact with English than do the women. Taken quite generally I should not say that the inroads of English have been much greater on Arthur Amish than on the dialect in the Pennsylvania German sections of Pennsylvania.

The first part of the thesis presents the phonology of the dialect; the second, the morphology. The third and last section deals with word lists. I note variations in the vocabulary and phonetic differences between my dialect and Arthur Amish. During the course of several months I was able to note 529 words which are not recorded in Lambert's fairly comprehensive Pennsylvania German Dictionary. This does not mean, however, that these words are lost to the dialect in Pennsylvania but rather one can conclude from the complete lack in that dictionary of the vocabulary pertaining to Amish church life that Lambert had not investigated for his dictionary the dialect as spoken by the Amish in Pennsylvania.

Phonology

First of all I shall give a short description of some of the characters employed in this study and then I shall list a few of the phonetic characters of ArAm. (By my dialect I mean the dialect as spoken in Lehigh County, Pennsylvania).

The doubling of a vowel indicates that the vowel is long. *a* is a mid-low mixed vowel (vocalized r). ää is a low back vowel with rounding. ää is a long open e sound. *e* is a slurred vowel. b is an unaspirated voiceless bilabial stop (lenis), p is an aspirated voiceless bilabial stop (fortis). d is a voiceless unaspirated dental stop (lenis), t an aspirated voiceless dental stop (fortis). g is an unaspirated voiceless velar stop (lenis), k an aspirated voiceless velar stop (fortis). s is the voiceless dental spirant (it is never voiced). ds is a dental affricate. l is unilateral, the tip of the tongue touching the alveoli. r is a singly trilled tongue tip r (the tip of the tongue touches the alveoli). w is a voiced labiodental spirant as in Standard German.

Albert F. Buffington (Pennsylvania German; Its Relation to other German Dialects. American Speech, December, 1939) speaks of three distinctively Pennsylvania German features: (1) the lowering of the MHG high vowels i, u and ue and the mid vowels e, o and oe to the short a sound under the influence of the following r, e.g. Pa. German darich for MHG durch. (2) the complete disappearance of the r sound after a short a when followed by a dental, e.g. Pa. German kads MHG kurz. (3) the regular development of a vowel between an r and a labial or velar sound, e.g. Pa. German darich, karep MHG durch, korp.

For Arthur Amish only feature (2) is valid. The MHG high vowels and the mid vowels mentioned are lowered to the short a sound only before MHG r plus a dental. Before MHG r plus a velar there is an i-development. As before the dental, the r disappears, but in his case a diphthong ae results, e.g. ArAm daech < darich MHG durch. There are only a very few speakers who use darich. There is no development of a vowel between an r plus a labial nor are the MHG vowels lowered to short a. Here, as before r plus a dental, the r disappears and long a develops, e.g. ArAm kaap MHG korp, or else the MHG vowels may become ää and the r is vocalized to *a*, e.g. ArAm kääap MHG korp.

In analogy to dialect unaspirated voiceless bilabial stop b which

becomes a voiced labiodental spirant in intervocalic position, MHG p in rûpe is ArAm w: raaew*e* (pl. of raaep) NHG Raupe.

A lenis d developed in the MHG consonant combinations fs and between n and l: lefds, kandl MHG lêfse, kanel.

The MHG suffix heit in the following words has been shortened to *et*: ââgween*et*, grangg*et*, wâ*âaret* MHG gewon(e)heit, krancheit, wârheit.

Through progressive distant-assimilation the w in MHG niuwan is m in ArAm: num*e* NHG nur.

In ArAm the MHG m in the final unaccented syllable is lost in beese, bod*e*, fââd*e*, MHG bësem, bodem, vadem.

MHG has several words with both u and ü. In ArAm both forms still exist in muk and mik NHG Fliege.

ArAm long i represents MHG ei in one instance and then only rarely: d*e*hiim MHG da heime.

Morphology

The following are some characteristic features of the morphology of Arthur Amish: (1) The diminutive of a noun ends in li (pl. lin) and never in (*e*l)ch*e* as in my dialect, (2) The nom. and acc. masc. sing. of the definite article is dää*a*, (3) The 3rd per. sing. nom. personal pronoun stressed form is ää*a*, (4) The 2nd pers. pl. personal pronoun is dii*a*. My dialect has nii*a*, (5) The neu. nom. and acc. sing. of the demonstrative pronoun wel*a* NHG welcher may be either wel or wels: e.g. wel kint? or wels kint? (6) The cardinals from 4 to 7, 8 to 9, 11 12 do not add *e* even when used substantively: ArAm segs fun uns sin doo d*e*heem, six of us live here, (7) The 2nd pers. pl. and the imperative pl. of a verb end in -*et*: nem*et*, kum*et*. In my Lehigh Co. dialect one hears the following plural imperatives: neme, nemen, nemt, but never nem*et*. (8) The 2nd per. pl. of the verb sae NHG sein is sint and of the verb haw*e* NHG haben, hent. (9) The pres. indic. of duu NHG tun is duu, duscht or duuscht, dut or duut; diin or duun(*e*), diint or duunt, diin or dun(*e*). (10) The imperfect subj. of dää*a*fe or daaf*e* NHG dürfen is ich dää*a*ft, daaft or daeft, etc. (11) The imperfect subj. of gee NHG gehen is gingt, etc.

Vocabulary Connected with Amish Church Life.

The Arthur Amish settlement is divided at the present time (1940) into eight districts called kääare (di kääa, sing.) or gmee. Each kääa or gmee normally has three ranks of church officials: a bishop, two ministers and a deacon. In the dialect the bishop is called either dääa felich diina (NHG Völliger Diener) or bischof (sometimes bischop). His office is designated s bischofamt. The two ministers are called the diina zum buch and the deacon is called dääa ääamediina NHG Armendiener). A person holding one of these offices is said to be am or im diinscht. All of them are bredicha.

Communion held twice a year is called the groosgmee. The preparatory service for the groosgmee is the adningsgmee.

The teschdement, meaning the New Testament, but not the biwl, meaning both the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha, is read at a church service.

When a young man wishes to get married he goes to the bishop who gets the consent of the girl and the parents. At this time the bishop is called the schdegliman. The attendants of a couple are called neewehoga.

The dress of the Amish differs from that of the "world." The men's go-to-meeting tail coat is called dääa mudse. The girls and women, who must at all times have their heads covered, wear a devotional covering called di kap (pl. di kabe).

Taboo Words.

The word na (NHG Narr) is not employed in the dialect because of the Bible verse in Matthew 5, 22, which reads: Wer aber zu seinem Bruder sagt: Racha, der ist des Raths schuldig. Wer aber sagt: Du Narr, der ist des höllischen Feuers schuldig.

The verb schide (NHG schütten), which was constantly misunderstood by their English speaking neighbors, was replaced by lääare (NHG leeren).

Amish mothers avoid using the phrase dääa baaeds grigt dich (the bogey man will get you) because, they say, there is no such being and hence they do not want to tell their children lies. Instead they use dääa dunggl (the darkness), which they personify.

The devil is usually spoken of as the wiischt man and instead of

going to hell they speak of going to the wiischt blads or in-s faea.

Designations for Certain Objects and Creatures.

Uropygial gland: During my study of the ArAm dialect I found the following words for the uropygial gland (oil-gland of fowls): fedschnebl, eelkenli, eelkeseli, eelkewich, eeldsebli, schmudshefeli, and schmudskenli. From my Lehigh Co. dialect I know dsibl, schmelspan and schwansgribs, none of which, however, is employed in ArAm.

Sow Bug: For sow I note the following: kelahââsli, kelakefa, kelalaaes, kelamaesli and kelaogs.

I shall list here 50 representative Pennsylvania German words of the 529 I found during the course of my study ofArAm. These are words not recorded in Lambert's Pennsylvania-German Dictionary.

aaesdreele, v., aaesgedreelt, to roll out (dough).

aaeslääare, v., aaesglääat, to empty; to extinguish a fire by pouring water on it.

bant, n., pl. bena, a band of straw for tying sheaves

begreebnis, n., cemetery.

bradsle, v., gebradslt, to sizzle. (also bredsle, brodsle).

dimididsli, m., litle finger in nursery rhyme: da daaeme, da finga, da langman, da johan, da dimididsli.

dreelhols, n., pl. dreehels (a), rolling pin.

fakafle, v., fakaflt, to soil, to dirty.

fadriile, v., fadriilt, to spill water all over the floor.

fariisle, v., fariislt, to upset, entangle.

fledamaaes, f., pl. fledamaes, bat.

frech, adj., gaudy.

galrich, m., souse.

gegisch, adj., silly.

glodsich, adj., soggy (of ground too wet for plowing).

graaednacht, f., Hallowe'en.

grii, adj., in expression: ääa is grii iwa sii, he is enamoured of her.

gwââadewael, n., in expression: n silwarich gwââadewael un un goldich gnigsli mit heembringe, to return home to the children empty handed (without candy).

hegsefal, f., anything insecure from which one might fall and break one's neck.

holsbok, m., pl. holsbek, stick insect, walking stick.

hoocha, m., pl. hooche, the term applied by the Amish to those who are not Amish.

kadscha, m., pl. (same), snip, runt (of boys).

kalware, v., gekalwat, to stumble, to act silly.

kam, m., pl. kem, coarse comb (a fine comb is called a schdreel).

keesschisl, f., pl. (same), colander.

kidare, v., gekidat, to giggle.

kifl, m., pl. (same), chin.

kiihoola, m., pl. (same), granddaddy-long-legs.

koda, m., discharged phlegm.

kudslich, adj., untidy, sloppy.

lele, v., glelt, to pant (of animals).

mufle, v., gmuflt, to speak indistinctly.

pafekafe, nasturtiums.

paschingleda, n., peeled peaches crushed, sweetened and then dried in sun or oven. (It is intended mostly as a sweetmeat for children, especially in the winter).

poda, m., pl. podre, bead.

raede, v., in expression: dääa bagofe raede, phrase applied to a young man or woman if, for the second time, a younger brother or sister gets married.

riiwegsicht, n., ugly face.

rok, m., pl. rek, dress.

schbadse, taffy.

schdegli schdege, a game played by jumping on one leg. Each time a little stick is stuck in the ground as far as the jumper is able to reach. The one who jumps the greatest distance in three jumps wins the game.

schdiiba, m., pl. (same), raised cake.

schdraaes, m., pl. schdraes, bunch (of grapes).

schef, f., pl. schefe, pod, shell.

schiisbrigl, m., scatter brain.

schnefle, v., gschneflt, to cut into minute pieces.

siine, v., gsiint, to filter, to strain.

silfeschda, m., the member of the family who gets up last on New Year's is called the s.

weschpedsa, m., pl. (same), clothes-pin.

dsebe, v., gedsebt, to plaint, to braid.

dsinde, v., gedsint, to light the way.

VITA

I, Alfred Lewis Shoemaker, was born April 11, 1913, in Saegersville, Pennsylvania. I attended public schools in Saegersville, Northampton and Slatington. In 1930, after graduation from Slatington High School, I enrolled in Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pennsylvania. My junior year I spent in Munich, Germany as a member of the University of Delaware's foreign study group. In 1934 I was graduated from Muhlenberg College. During the academic year 1934-35 I attended Mt. Airy Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and Crozier Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania. The year 1935-36 I spent in graduate study at the University of Heidelberg in Heidelberg, Germany. The next year I was Scholar in German at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. In the fall of 1937 I came to the University of Illinois, where I have spent the past three years as part-time assistant in German and graduate student in German and History. In the summer of 1938 I traveled in France and attended the summer session of the Sorbonne at Paris. In February, 1939, I passed the preliminary examination for the Ph.D. degree.

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